

Amalrik is no fiction

Los Angeles

Dear ERIK BERT

Is it true that Andrei Amalrik exists and lives in Moscow now, or is it just a fiction?

—N.E.

By ERIK BERT

Andrei Amalrik, the author of "Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?" is "living in Moscow or sometimes in a cabin he and Gysel (his wife) have bought for a few rubles on a state farm," according to Henry Kamm, New York Times correspondent, in a preface to the volume. Kamm describes a visit to Amalrik's flat.

The book was reviewed by me in the Daily World of March 18.

It was published this year by Harper & Row, New York and Evanston and Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Limited, Toronto. It "was first published in the Russian language by the Alexander Herzen Foundation . . . Amsterdam . . . The Netherlands," according to a note in the Harper & Row edition.

The Harper & Row dust jacket reproduces a photograph showing Amalrik and his wife picketing what is, according to Kamm, the British Embassy in Moscow in 1968 on behalf of "Biafra."

Amalrik's book has been chosen this month by the Book-of-the-Month Club as an "extra book" which will be sent, it says, "without charge to every Book-of-the-Month Club member who buys another book."

The Book-of-the-Month Club, "as part of its crusading effort in the book's behalf . . . is sending a copy to every college and university library in the United States and Canada, with a suggestion that it be called to the attention of the students and the faculty." So we are informed by a BMC advertising flyer.

The flyer assures us that "the book is being published beyond the Iron Curtain with the author's full approval."

The Book-of-the-Month Club takes this CIA-type project a step

beyond where Harper & Row, the U.S. publishers, left it. A blurb in the flyer, by somebody called Peter Gardner, says Amalrik "invites readers who can afford constructive criticism to write him at Vakhtangov Street 5, Apartment 5, Moscow G-2, U.S.S.R."

Only a dim-wit would be taken in by Amalrik's alleged panting for "constructive criticism." The purpose seems obvious. Amalrik's address is bait, offered to get U.S. addresses from unsuspecting souls who are taken in by either Amalrik, or Gardner, or the Book-of-the-Month Club. The massive distribution projected by the BMC should bring some returns, even on a low percentage-of-returns basis. To what end? Probably, only the CIA knows, and they won't tell.

Peter Gardner is uplifted by Amalrik's anti-socialist, anti-Soviet effort. He wants to believe in Amalrik's "apocalyptic forecast" of the destruction of the Soviet Union. "The recipe for cataclysm already lies there, if Mr. Amalrik's judgment is true," says Gardner.

Gardner would have the Book-of-the-Month Club audience believe that Amalrik, a "serious and courageous thinker who believes in telling the truth," represents a "new, apparently fearless generation of dissent."

That "dissent" is not new. There's a special department in the CIA which cultivates such "idealists" (as C.L. Sulzberger, New York Times foreign correspondent, describes them, in a blurb within the BMC-Gardner blurb).

Sec. 4.01.2 Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?